



BMBA Guide to: The 'NO ZONE' Rule

Version – 3 (01/07/22)

This document has been produced as a BMBA guide to the 'No Zone' policy in our U10 – U19 Domestic Competitions. This guide is designed to assist with the implementation of Basketball Australia's 'no zone defence' rule in the BMBA Domestic Competitions with an exemption for the U8 competition.

This document provides the following Contents:

Part 1 - What is the 'No Zone' rule?

- BMBA Definition – Zone Defence

Part 2 - Why has the rule been introduced?

- BMBA – History leading to this decision

Part 3 - How is the Rule to be Administered/Implemented?

- A decision for the Referees
- Not a decision for the Venue Supervisors/Parents/Spectators

Part 4 - What is a 'Zone Defence

- Guarding an Area
- Guarding Many or Guarding No One

Part 5 - How we will Identify a Zone - Onus of Proof

- Watch a Number of Play Phases not just one
- Don't worry about the full court it will take care of itself
- Don't penalise bad man to man defence
- It does not have to be aggressive defence
- What is the team trying to do?
- Teams can Trap

Part 6 - Tools for proving it's a zone or not

- Moving a Split Line Defender
- Cut to the ball side
- Move to the perimeter – ball side
- Cutting from low to high
- Have player trail high in transition
- Reverse the Ball
- Pass and Cut to the Basket
- Overload the Ball Side





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 that this rule be implemented in all U14 (and younger) competitions.

Basketball Australia Definition of Zone Defence - *Any defence played inside the three-point line which does not incorporate normal ‘man to man’ defensive principles shall be considered to be a zone. Violations of the ‘no zone’ rule will generally fall within one of the following situations:*

Situations:

- One or more players were not in an acceptable man to man defensive position in relation to the player they are guarding and the player with the ball.
- 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).
- Following a trapping or help/recover situation the team made no attempt to re-establish man to man defense.
- The team zone pressed and did not assume man to man defensive positioning once the ball had been advanced into the quarter court.

If you think a team is playing Zone, then feedback can be provided to the Game Day Referee Supervisor in charge in a polite/positive manner, at an appropriate time.

- If you are the Coach of the team, then at an appropriate game break please communicate your thoughts to the game referee.
- All spectators are NOT to approach the game Referee in any manner
- Make no comment or approach the Coach playing zone
- If there are ongoing concerns about the defence continually played by a particular team during the season, this can be communicated via email to admin@bmbasketball.org.au and if proven to be correct that Club, will be required to immediately educate the respective coach on acceptable man to man principles.

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

- Lazy defence
- Poor coaching
- Tired players; or
- 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 to rectify the appearance prior to any action being taken.

Part 2 – Why has the 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 supporting the exclusive use of man defence at U14 and younger age groups.

Coaching resources produced by FIBA (basketball’s international body) 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 your player and the ball are important fundamentals that underpin most, if not all, defensive philosophies. 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 or throw 'skip' passes. This reduces the need for defensive skills such as 'closing out' and positioning.

Whilst the 'no zone' rule focuses on the 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. The BMBA have taken the view that this rule is an important factor in improving the standard of Basketball played in Bacchus Marsh and as such have implemented this No Zone rule for all domestic competitions with the exemption of all U8 games, which have been deemed too young at this point.

Part 3 – How is the Rule to be administered/implemented?

This will come under the management and control of the game referee, they will adjudicate whether or not a zone defence is being played, using the above situations shown.

The BMBA has adopted the philosophy that zone defence should not be played from Under 10 upwards. As a competition rule, the BMBA has excluded the U8 competition and are conscious that most coaches and most players are unlikely to breach the rule knowingly or deliberately, by playing a zone defence.

However, the following will be the course of action, should it be deemed by the game referee that a team is playing a Zone in the first half of any BMBA Game:

Rule:

In all BMBA scheduled junior games from U10 through to U19, Zone defence is not permitted to be played by either team in the first half of any game, including all finals games.

Action:

Where it is deemed a team is playing a Zone in the first Half on any BMBA game, the game referee will immediately notify the Team in question's Coach of their observation, whereby giving that Coach an opportunity to either explain their structure for consideration and/or immediately alter their defence tactics for the remainder of that half.

Any team guilty of continuing to not abide by this rule may be penalised with a technical foul being placed on the bench and the other team being given two (2) free throws. This action will then continue with every violation and/or at the discretion of the game referee.

We appreciate that some Coaches may be a parent / guardian, family friend or older brother or sister, with limited Coaching experience, so it would not be surprising if they needed some help if there are concerns about the defence played by a particular team during the season, then this should be communicated to the BMBA who will endeavour to support all coaches by running No Zone-specific courses throughout each season.





Part 4 – What is a ‘Zone Defence’?

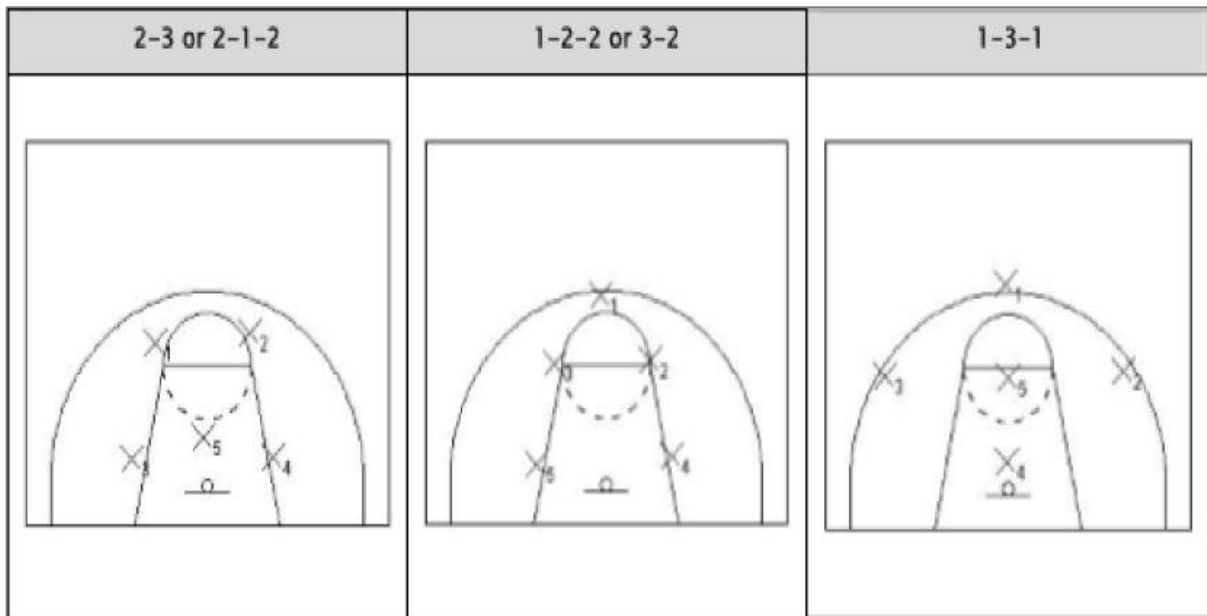
Guarding an Area

Zone defense is a form of team defense where each player becomes responsible for defending an area of the court, normally without changing their position and only defending any opponent who may enter that immediate area. It should be noted, that when five players work together in a zone it can become a very formidable defense and hard to penetrate when learning how to play basketball.

Zone defenses are primarily designed to protect the area within the key and the basket. This essentially means that the offensive team will be forced to take lower percentage, outside/perimeter shots.

Common examples:

There are (3) of common zone defense alignments, such as:



These defenses when played within the boundary of the three-point line primarily clog the keyway area.

This often forces the offensive team to shoot from the outside/perimeter (and indeed are designed to have this effect), which can be detrimental to the technique development of younger athletes. It also reduces driving opportunities which hampers the development of young players close-out and rotation skills.



Guarding Many or Guarding No One

The result of the zone defense is that one player may be responsible for guarding many players, or may not have anyone in their area at all, they will therefore be required to defend a particular player.

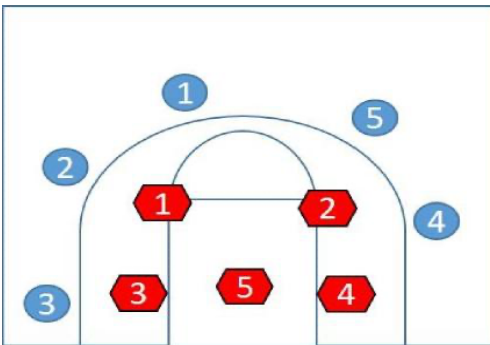


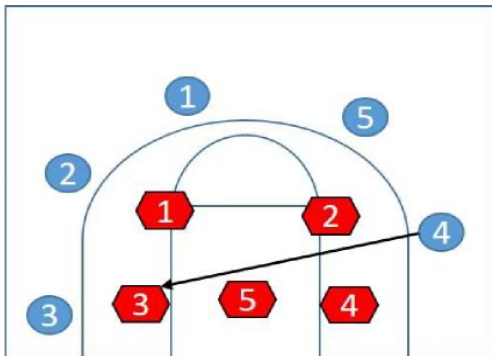
Diagram 1

The following defensive assignments would probably apply, if the defense were in zone:

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

Diagram 2

It would be particularly obvious that this is a zone if Red 4 does not follow Blue 4 if that player were to cut.



Commonly Red 4 & Red 5 will 'ball watch' rather than maintain vision of their area (as there are no players in this area).

This is poor defensive technique, which is accentuated by playing a zone defense. In man-to-man defense, while some players will undoubtedly 'ball watch' there is always a clear responsibility for who they should be seeing.

Part 5 - How we will Identify a Zone.

The responsibility for identifying a team playing a zone has been placed with the game day referee.

We appreciate that some Coaches may be a parent / guardian, family friend or older brother or sister, with limited Coaching experience, so it would not be surprising if they needed some help if there are concerns about the defence played by a particular team during a game, then this should be communicated to the referee in charge of that game, who will endeavour to answer your query using the following guidelines:

Onus of Proof

- Watch a Number of Play Phases not just one
- Don't worry about the full court it will take care of itself
- Don't penalise bad man to man defence
- It does not have to be aggressive defence
- What is the team trying to do?
- Teams can Trap





So, a referee will take on the onus of proof and try to establish whether a team is playing a zone or it is not, prior to making any further decision.

Part 6 – Proving it's a Zone

The following is a summary of activities, which the referee may use to identify if a zone is being played:

Moving a Split Line Defender

A basic principle of man-to-man defense is that they are closer to 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 you can be.

When players are on the weakside (opposite to the ball) in a man-to-man defence will adopt a split line position, usually in the middle of the court. To prove a defender is playing zone defense requires specific movement from the offence. Here are some ways to do it:

Cut to the ball side

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 who must follow his player and they cannot stay on the split line.

Move to the perimeter – ball side

If the offensive player cuts to a post position, it may still be difficult to determine what defense is being played as many teams guard a post player from behind.

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

Having a player cut above the foul line forces the defender to step away from in front of the basket.

Although the defender may stay on the split line, if the offensive player cuts as high as the top of the circle, the defender must clearly react to the cut.

Have player trail high in transition

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!

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

Simply reversing the ball from one side of the court to the other requires the defense to move. This movement can help to identify who each defender is guarding (or whether they are playing a zone defense).

Pass and Cut to the Basket

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

By having players cut to the ball side, the defense needs to adjust. If the low weakside defender was to stay where they are, it would not be apparent who they were guarding!

