

Basketball Coach Handout

Basics of Full Court Pressing Defense

Transition defense can be even more sophisticated with full-court pressing defense. First, the disadvantages of a press defense are that it takes a lot of practice time to develop a good, cohesive press. Also, remember that the full-court press is a gamble (especially trapping zone defenses). You risk giving up the easy transition lay-up. Good offensive teams with good ball handlers and passers can break the press and turn it into their advantage with an easy score. If you press the entire game, your players may become fatigued, may get into foul trouble, and the offence often "figures it out" with time. So you might want to press only in certain situations (e.g. after a made basket), or certain times of the game. You may want to use the press as a "surprise" tactic.

The advantages are that it can quickly produce backcourt turnovers, and easy steals and scores for your team. So it is an offensive weapon as such, and a way to come from behind, or a way to break open a close game. The press keeps the opponent off-balance, changes the tempo of the game, and often has the opponent doing things they don't normally like to do. It often forces the opposing coach to use valuable time-outs. It favours a well-conditioned team with a deep bench, and with more substitutions, allows more of your players to get playing time. There is a saying, "To error is human, and pressure causes error."

Some basic principles apply to all presses.

1. Always have one player back in prevent mode to prevent the easy lay-up.

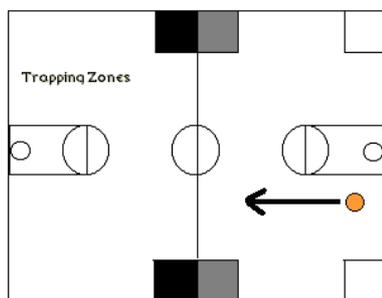
2. Sprint back to the paint when you are beaten.

3. Trapping (setting the double-team)

In trapping, one defender should first stop the dribbler, often along the sideline or baseline, or in one of the "trapping zones"(see below). Trapping zones are those areas where the offensive player definitely does not want to get caught losing his dribble. It's like getting caught in a corner.

Key Points:

- a. Once the ball is stopped, the second defender sprints over and double-teams the ball carrier. They cut off the ball-handler's view, and get into his passing lane.
- b. Their knees are adjacent to each other to prevent the ball-handler from "splitting" the trap. The position of their hands should be at the same height as the ball.
- c. If the offensive player holds the ball high to "throw over the top", the hands should be high.
- d. If the ball is low, the hands should be low to prevent the bounce pass.
- e. **Do not reach in!** When trapping, or trying to stop the dribbler.
 - i. The trapping players should deny the player from getting the pass off and get the 5-second call, or force her to make a bad pass, which is intercepted by one of your team-mates.
 - ii. Defenders must move their feet to get into position and deny the sideline. The referee is watching closely for the reach-in foul. Back-court fouls are usually "stupid" fouls, created when the opponent was not even in position to score. It's especially "stupid" if the opponent is in the two-shot bonus, or if it is committed with only seconds remaining in a period.
- f. The other defenders, who are not actively trapping, try to get into the gaps between the ball-handler and his teammates. They play the passing lanes and deny and intercept passes from the trapped player.



The white coloured zones catch the player in the corner.

The dark zones are excellent trapping zones, since the offensive player cannot retreat across the 8-second line.

The lighter zones are good trapping zones because the offence has to worry about the 8-second count.

4. If the opponent is successful in running a fast break, your "prevent" guard may find herself in a 2-on-1, or 3-on-1 situation, she being the only defender back. In this situation, the prevent defender should be taught to first prevent the lay-up. If the opponent chooses to shoot the outside jumper, give it to her, as it is a lower percentage shot than the lay-up, you avoid getting a foul, and you may get the rebound, or delay the offence long enough for your team-mates to arrive on defense. Again, the defender must stay back and "gap" the offensive players, that is, try to straddle and cut off the passing lanes to the easy lay-up.