

Basketball Coach Handout

Types of Full Court Pressing Defense

Often a pressing team will use more than one type of press. As the offence calls a time-out and makes adjustments to your press, you can change to another type of press. Or you can make simple adjustments of your own, such as whether to guard the in-bounds passer or not, whether to deny the in-bounds pass with full-denial defence, or allow the in-bounds pass in the corner, and then go trap it.

There are many type of presses. Listed are a few examples.

Man-to-Man Press

Full-Court Pressure Defence

Zone Presses

2-2-1 Zone Press

1-2-1-1 Diamond Zone Press

A. Full-Court Pressure Defence

For our full-court press, we will simply play full-court man-to-man "pressure defence". This is a good full-court defence for younger players to play because:

1. It is effective. Just a little man-to-man pressure will often cause the offence to turn the ball over. More experienced (high-school level) offensive players can break this defence down, but usually not middle-school players.
2. It is easy to teach and requires little practice time. A full-court zone press on the other hand requires considerable practice time to learn it correctly.
3. Players use and learn the same basic concepts of man-to-man defence (on-ball, deny and help-side defence, just extended to the full-court).
4. There is little risk, or gambling, with this defence.

The full-court pressure defence is a man-to-man full-court defence. Instead of using the phrase, "we are going to press this team", I tell my players "we are going to pressure this team." A full-court zone press often implies trapping, gambling. With the "pressure defence", we do not gamble or trap much. A zone press that emphasizes trapping is always a gamble. A good offence with quick, experienced guards can break through and score easy lay-ups. Pressure defence is not a gambling defence. It applies full-court pressure to the ball, while still protecting against the easy lay-up. It basically is the same as half-court man-to-man defence, but extended to the entire court. The defender "on-ball" picks her man up tightly, moves her feet and stays between her and the basket. The defenders, who are on the ball-side, play "denial" and stay in the passing lanes between the ball and their man. The other defenders, who are opposite the ball-side, play "help-side", and help protect the basket against the easy lay-up. So, what it looks like is the "on ball", and ball-side defenders playing a typical man defence, but the opposite side looks like a zone back in the paint. There is a saying, "A good man-to-man looks like a zone, and a good zone looks like a man." This is very true of this defence.

All defenders must see the ball at all times. They should try to be in position to see both the ball and their man.

There is one difference using this full-court man-to-man defence, as opposed to the half-court man to man, and that is this. If the ball breaks through the perimeter, or gets up the floor ahead of any defender, all defenders except the "on-ball" defender must sprint back to the paint to prevent the lay-up. The "on-ball" defender tries to stay with the ball.

There are two ways of starting the pressure in transition. First, after a made basket or ball out-of-bounds, have each defender get on her assigned man. Second, after a rebound, steal, or turnover in transition, have each defender just pick up the man closest to her, rather than trying to run and find her pre-assigned man. Any mismatches that occur are usually outweighed by getting the pressure started immediately, and stopping the fast break. If the offence advances into half-court, players can "switch" at opportune moments when they are back in half-court.

Trapping, while not the primary consideration, is not completely excluded. If the offensive man bringing the ball up is caught along the sideline, or in one of the trapping areas (see below), a second defender can run over to his blind-side and trap him, hoping to create a turnover. But do not reach-in and get the foul! The other defenders then should be ready to intercept.

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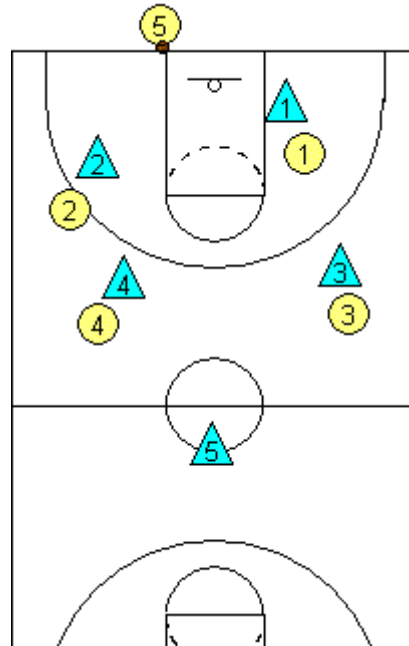
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This full-court man defence will require the defenders to switch when they are screened. These switches must be called out loudly and happen immediately, so that the ball does not get by them. Again, any mismatches, can be switched back later in the half-court if necessary, or your team can optionally drop back into a zone defence in the half-court.

Remember, good "pressure defence" is not a gambling one, but one that extends the pressure over the entire floor, while still protecting the paint. This steady, relentless pressure over the course of the game will harass and tire the opponent, and will cause the offence to make bad passes, and other turnovers that they would never make if they were just allowed to dribble up the floor slowly and uncontested. "It is human to err, and pressure causes error."

"41 Deny"

Use this man-to-man press to deny the inbounds pass. You are going for the 5-second count, or an interception of a poorly made pass from the in-bounder. With this press, the defender whose assigned person is the in-bounder gets back to at least half-court or beyond as the "safety" against the long pass and lay-up. The other four defenders immediately locate their man and deny the pass from the in-bounder by playing the passing lanes and staying between their man and the ball. These four defenders should not worry about the long pass over their heads, as the "safety" is back to stop that.



B. 2-2-1 Zone Press

Set up the 2-2-1 zone press like this (see Diagram A). Have two players set at both ends of the free throw line. Two other defenders should be positioned just inside the half-court line, and the fifth player plays "prevent".

The in-bounds pass is not contested or guarded. Do not allow a pass in the middle of the floor. The defenders #1 and #2 should allow the pass to a receiver near the corner. They should wait until he commits himself and starts dribbling. Once he starts his dribble, they should attack and trap him near the sideline (Diagram B). The other two defenders then position themselves in the passing lanes to other would-be receivers and look for the interception. The #5 defender should only come up if he has a clear-cut interception. At this point the defence looks like a "trap-2-1" zone.

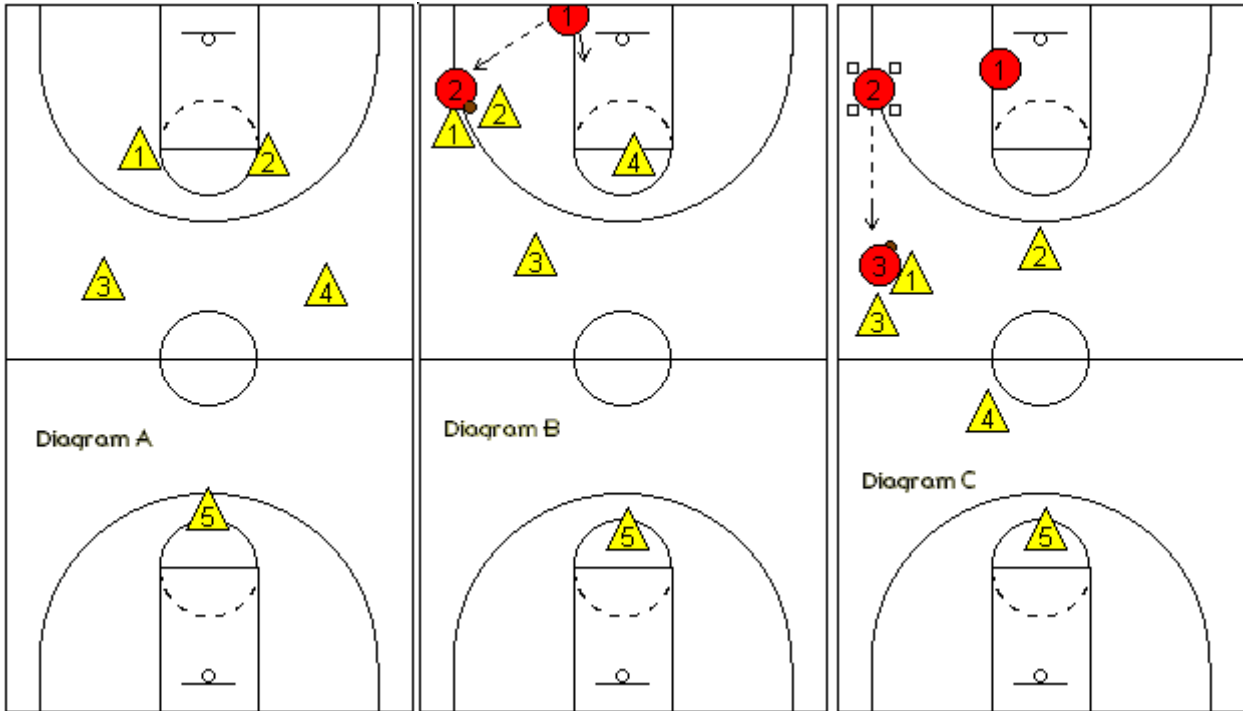
If the ball gets part way up the sideline, the mid-court defender (#3 or #4) should stop the penetration along the sideline, and trap the ball-handler along with the guard from that side (#1 or #2). Now the opposite guard and mid-court defenders play the zone passing lanes (see Diagram C).

Allow a backward, retreating pass, as the 8-second rule is in your favour. If the ball moves to the opposite side, the traps and zones are set on that side the same as described above, only with the opposite defenders positioned as above. The defenders should never let the ball get ahead of them on the court. If that happens, they must sprint down-court quickly to recover. Once the press is broken, or the offence crosses mid-court, all defenders not on the ball should sprint back to the paint to protect basket (unless there is an easy trap in the sideline, mid-court line corner). The on-ball defender should stay on the ball and stop dribble penetration.

There are variations and adjustments to this basic zone, depending on how the offence uses their point guard... i.e. whether he tries to receive the in-bounds pass, or make the in-bounds pass and then receive the ball right back

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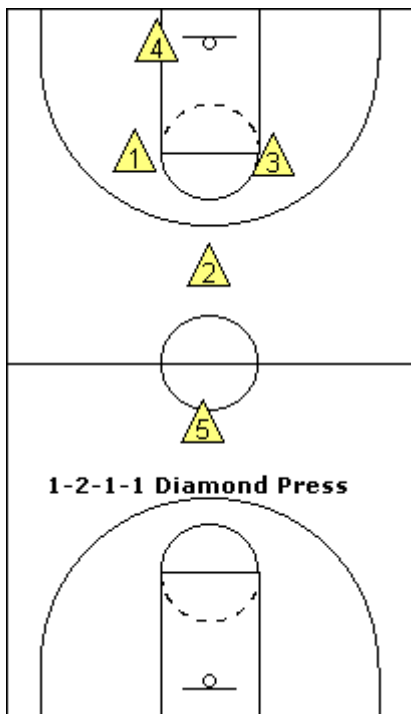
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C. "1-2-1-1 Zone Press – Diamond Press"

The 1-2-1-1 zone press pressures the in-bounds passer, and attempts to trap the first pass receiver. You can call either "one fist" or "two fist" options from the bench to change your strategy a little, and confuse the opponent.

With one-fist and two-fist, always try to deny a centre in-bounds pass... make them pass to a player in the corner, or off to the side.



When the offensive player is trapped in the corner, or along the sideline, make sure the first defender to get there, seals off the sideline, so the offensive player cannot dribble up the sideline. The other defenders must play in the gaps between the passing lanes, and try to deny or intercept the pass.

"One-Fist"

#4 and #1 (or #3) immediately trap the first pass.

"Two Fist"

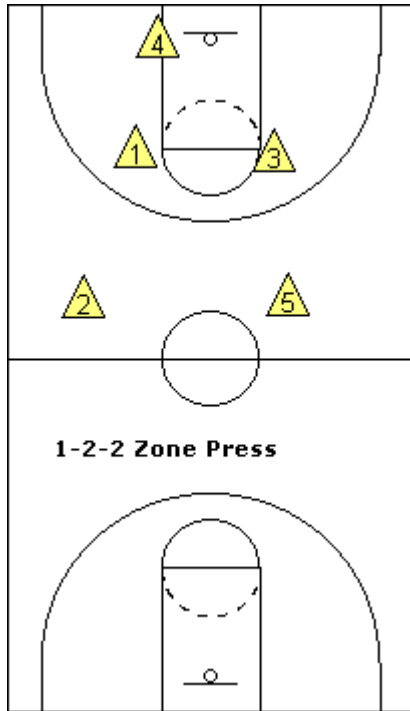
#4 and #1 (or #3) wait until the first pass receiver puts the ball on the floor and starts her dribble, and then quickly close in and trap her. In this situation, you are waiting for the pass receiver to first commit herself with the dribble. Once you trap her, she has lost her option to dribble.

"Side Fist"

You can also call "side fist" to signal your players to trap the ball handler along the sideline, either in the back-court, or the front-court.

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Adjustment, changing to a 1-2-2 zone press

The 1-2-1-1 diamond press is vulnerable up the sidelines. If the opponent is beating your press up the sidelines, then you can adjust your defence to a 1-2-2 zone press. #2 and #5 stop the sideline passing and dribble penetration.

Of course, this press is a gamble and makes you more susceptible to getting beat long for a lay-up. Have a rule that if one offensive player goes long, then the mid-court weak-side defender (opposite the ball) will move back to prevent the long pass. For example, if the ball is on the left side (#1's side), or in the centre, and a player goes long, then #5 should drop back. If the ball is on the right side (#3's side), then #2 drops back.